

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /036 W
-----107766 172218Z /13

R 161527Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7601
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 07369

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, AU
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: AUSTRIAN UN AMBASSADOR
DR. THOMAS KLESTIL

1. DR. THOMAS KLESTIL (PHONETIC:KLES-TEEL) WAS APPOINTED
AUSTRIAN AMBSSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN JULY 1978.

2. FROM 1974 UNTIL 1978, AMBASSADOR KLESTIL SERVED AS
DIRECTOR IN THE SPECIAL SECTION OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS CALLED "INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, NOTABLY HEAD-
QUARTERS QUESTIONS." IN THAT CAPACITY HE WAS RESPONSIBLE
FOR PROMOTING AND IMPLEMENTING PLANS FOR FURTHER EXPANSION
OF VIENNA AS A HEADQUARTERS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND A SITE OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES. THE MAJOR ELEMENT
OF THE PLAN WAS CONSTRUCTION OF THE DONAU PARK COMPLEX,
WHICH AUSTRIA WILL GIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE
INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY IN 1979 TO HOUSE THEIR
ACTIVITIES IN VIENNA.

3. IN PARTICULAR, KLESTIL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR INTER-
NATIONAL LOBBYING EFFORTS TO SECURE TRANSFER OF U.N. UNITS
FROM NEW YORK AND GENEVA TO FILL THE AMBITIOUS DONAU PARK
COMPLEX -- TERMED "U.N. CITY" -- WHICH HAD BECOME A CON-
TENTIOUS DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE IN AUSTRIA. LARGELY TO
ACCOMMODATE THOSE EFFORTS, KLESTIL SERVED AS AUSTRIAN
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OBSERVER OR DELEGATE TO NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS,
INCLUDING THE COLOMBO SUMMIT AND NEW DELHI FOREIGN MINIS-
TERS CONFERENCES OF THE NONALIGNED, THE IAEA GENERAL
CONFERENCE IN RIO, THE VANCOUVER HABITAT CONFERENCE, AND
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLIES IN NEW YORK. HE ALSO HEADED
BILATERAL MISSIONS TO NAIROBI, CAIRO, TEHRAN AND WASHING-
TON WITH THE SAME OBJECTIVE IN MIND.

4. KLESTIL WAS HIGHLY ENERGETIC, PERSISTENT, PERSUASIVE AND SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING AUSTRIAN OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO DONAU PARK, AND IN THE COURSE OF THAT WORK HE DEVELOPED EXTREMELY WIDE PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH HIGH-LEVEL DIPLOMATS OF MANY NATIONS AS WELL AS WITH OFFICIALS IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS. THIS SHOULD BE OF GREAT USE TO HIM AS AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS.

5. KLESTIL, WHO IS 46 YEARS OLD, RECEIVED HIS DOCTORATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC SCIENCES IN VIENNA, AFTER WHICH HE SERVED IN THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY BUREAU FOR ECONOMIC COORDINATION, 1957-59; ON THE AUSTRIAN PERMANENT DELEGATION TO THE OECD IN PARIS, 1959-62; IN THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY AT WASHINGTON, 1962-66; AS SECRETARY TO THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR, 1966-69; AND AS CONSUL GENERAL AT LOS ANGELES, 1969-74.

6. KLESTIL SPEAKS FONDLY OF HIS MANY YEARS IN WASHINGTON AND LOS ANGELES, AND THERE IS IN HIM A LOT OF THE OPEN, FRIENDLY MANNER OF THE AMERICAN EVEN THOUGH HE APPEARS AT FIRST GLANCE TO BE THE TYPICALLY RESERVED BUT CORRECT AUSTRIAN DIPLOMAT. KLESTIL'S DYNAMIC ENTHUSIASM FOR THE U.N. CITY PROJECT SOMETIMES LED HIM TO BE A SLIGHTLY OVER-AGGRESSIVE CONVERSATIONALIST, BUT WE WOULD EXPECT THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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TRAIT TO BE TONED DOWN IN HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT.

7. KLESTIL'S POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS ARE WITH THE CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE'S PARTY, WHICH CAUSED SOME PROBLEMS FOR HIS ASSIGNMENT TO THE UNITED NATIONS AS AMBASSADOR. HE WAS, HOWEVER, CLEARLY THE MOST QUALIFIED APPLICANT FOR THE POSITION AND, ACCORDING TO THE MFA PERSONNEL RULES WITH WHICH KLESTIL HIMSELF WAS INTIMATELY CONCERNED AS THE ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO DENY HIM THE APPOINTMENT.

8. KLESTIL'S WIFE, EDITH-MARIA, IS PARISIAN. THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN, URSULA (19), THOMAS (16), AND STEFAN (11), ALL OF WHOM ATTENDED AMERICAN SCHOOLS WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES AND WHO, LIKE THEIR PARENTS, SPEAK GERMAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH FLUENTLY.

9. KLESTIL'S FAVORITE PASTIMES ARE TENNIS AND SKIING. AN EMBASSY OFFICER WHO HAS PLAYED TENNIS WITH KLESTIL RATES HIM AS "AN AVERAGE CLUB PLAYER WITH PASSABLE GROUND STROKES, BUT WEAK ON THE VOLLEY." WOLF

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, AMBASSADORS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENNA07369
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780337-0116
Format: TEL
From: VIENNA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780856/aaaabuul.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3ce08662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1716259
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: AUSTRIAN UN AMBASSADOR DR. THOMAS KLESTIL
TAGS: PINR, AU, (KLESTIL, THOMAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3ce08662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014